

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A fixation device for treating bone fractures, comprising[[:]]:

- (a) an integral elongate fixator body having a length;
- (b) a first support pin having a proximal end and a distal end, the distal end for coupling to a first bone segment and the proximal end [[for]] movably ~~coupling~~ coupled to the elongate fixator body; [[and]]
- (c) a second support pin having a proximal end and a distal end, the distal end for coupling to [[the]] a second bone segment and the proximal end [[for]] movably ~~coupling~~ coupled to the elongate fixator body;
- (d) wherein the proximal [[end]] ends of the first and second support pins are movably ~~secured~~ coupled to the elongate fixator body at selectively adjustable locations so as to define a first separation distance therebetween, and wherein the support pins are moveable with respect to the elongate fixator body by an applied external force to define a second separation distance therebetween.

2. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 1 further including a spacer disposed between the first and second support pins to partially determine the separation distance between the first and second support pins.

3. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 2, wherein the spacer is a biasing component adapted to bias the first support pin away from the second support pin.

4. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 2 furthering including a fastener for coupling to a distal end of the elongate fixator body.

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5. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 4, wherein the fastener may be selectively positioned along the length of the elongate fixator body to thereby compress the spacer between the first and second support pins.

6. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 2 further including an outer spacer disposed between the fastener and the first or second support pin.

7. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 6, wherein the outer spacer is a biasing component adapted to bias the first or second support pin from the fastener.

8. (Currently amended) A bone fracture fixation kit, comprising[[:]]:

- (a) an elongate fixator body having a length and a slot disposed substantially along the length;
- (b) a first support shaft having a distal end for coupling to a first bone segment of a user and a proximal end for being slidably received within the slot of the elongate fixator body;
- (c) a second support shaft having a distal end for coupling to a second bone segment and a proximal end for being coupled to the elongate fixator body; and
- (d) ~~at least one of a spacer or~~ a biasing component [[each]] having an inner passage for receiving the elongate fixator body at least partially therein, wherein the ~~spacer or~~ biasing component is adapted to be received by the elongate fixator body and be disposed between the first and second support shafts when the first and second support shafts are received by the slot of the elongate fixator body to provide a selected separation therebetween.

9. (Currently amended) The kit of Claim 8, further comprising a securement fastener for holding one of the support shafts against the ~~spacer or~~ biasing component.

10. (Currently amended) The kit of Claim 8, further comprising ~~a plurality of spacers~~, at least one spacer, at least two biasing components, ~~or combinations thereof~~, and at least two securement fasteners.

11. (Currently amended) The kit of Claim 10, wherein the ~~spacers are~~ at least one spacer is a static ~~spring~~ spring and the at least two biasing components are dynamic springs.

12. (Original) The kit of Claim 10, wherein the securement fasteners are threaded locking nuts.

13. (Currently amended) A fixation device, comprising:
[[a]] an integral support member;
a plurality of support shafts movably associated with the support member; and
at least one biasing component positioned between the support shafts by the support member, wherein the biasing component and the support member movably interconnect the support shafts at a variable separation distance so as to provide controlled interaction between the support shafts upon application of a sufficient force on one of the shafts.

14. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 13, wherein the fixation device is configured for use external to the skin surface of a patient.

15. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 13, wherein the longitudinal axis of each support shaft is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

16. (Original) A fixation device, comprising:
a support member, wherein the support member includes at least one slot extending through the side of the support member;

first and second support shafts extending through the slot of the support member, the slot and the support shafts being configured and dimensioned to allow movement of the support shafts in a longitudinal direction with respect to the support member; and

a coupling assembly positioned along the support member, wherein the coupling assembly is configured and arranged to 1) releasably couple the support shafts to the support member at a selectable separation distance; 2) apply a force against the support shafts; and 3) permit controlled movement of the first support shaft with respect to the second support shaft.

17. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the force applied against the support shafts is variable.

18. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the longitudinal axis of each support shaft is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

19. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the coupling assembly includes springs to apply force against the support shafts.

20. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the coupling assembly includes at least one selectively positionable coupler, the position of the coupler partially determining the magnitude of the applied force against the support shafts.

21. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 20, wherein the coupler is a threaded fastener or clamp.

22. (Currently amended) A fixation device used to treat bone fractures, comprising:
[[a]] an integral support member having a longitudinal axis; and

at least two support shafts having distal ends adapted to be connected to bone segments, the support shafts being slidably coupled to the support member in a spaced-apart manner, the support shafts being oriented substantially transverse to the longitudinal axis of the support member;

wherein the support shafts are biased inwardly along the longitudinal axis of the support member at selectively adjustable locations so as to define a first separation distance therebetween, and wherein the support shafts are moveable with respect to the support member by an applied external force to define a second separation distance therebetween.

23. (Original) The device of Claim 22, further comprising biasing structure operably associated with the support member and the support shafts, the biasing structure configured to bias the support shafts inwardly along the longitudinal axis of the support member.

24. (Currently amended) A fixation device used to treat bone fractures, comprising:
[[a]] an integral fixator body having a longitudinal axis;
first and second support pins each having distal ends adapted to be connected to a bone segment; and
means for dynamically coupling the support pins to the fixator body in a selectively adjustable manner and for controlling the movement of the first support pin with respect to the second support pin.

25-27. (Canceled).